Table of Contents

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7
8. 8
9. 9
10. 10
11. 11
12. 12
13. 13
14. 14
15. Author's Note

1

[image]

Jayfeather pawed the pile of herbs, his mind wandering far away from where he really was.

Her familiar scent washed over him, brilliant emerald-green eyes blinking up at him, embedded in his memory forever. Jayfeather could almost see, almost *sense* her right beside him, sitting alongside him. Once before, he had fallen in love with this cat...

"*I will wait for you forever, Jay's Wing!"*

He could still remember it. Still remember *her*. Still remember everything...

"Jayfeather? Are you alright?"

The blind medicine cat snapped his head up, startled out of his thoughts. "Yes, I'm quite alright Briarlight," he snapped. Standing up, he stretched, trying to shake away the memory that made his heart ache with longing. "I would appreciate it if you didn't ask me that question every few seconds."

He could feel Briarlight's sadness. Pity almost made him apologise - but he didn't. Jayfeather found the corner where he stored his catmint. He scooped a small pawful. "Sorry, Jayfeather. It's just that you've been so..." Her voice trailed off, and Jayfeather could tell that she was hesitating.

"So?" He prompted, rather impatiently. He padded towards the entrance to the den, about to leave.

Claws scraped against the bare ground. Briarlight's familiar scent wafted closer as she came to stand beside him. "So lost." She completed in a soft voice. Jayfeather blinked.

Jay's Wing...

"I am *not* lost, Briarlight. I'm here." Jayfeather said, walking out of the den with a false facade of his usual curtness on. Deep within, his heart accelerated faster at just the thought of Half Moon...

Briarlight caught up beside him, breaking his thoughts once again. "Physically you are, but I was talking about... mentally," Briarlight replied back in a cheerful manner, unperturbed by his curt attitude towards her. "Who are you taking the catmint to?" She asked after he didn't say anything.

"Millie. Her bad cough is starting to worry me. It may be greencough."

Briarlight kept quiet after that. *Worry for her mother, probably.* Jayfeather moved his head so that his sightless eyes seemed to be looking at her. Briarlight playfully flicked her paw over his ear. "What are you looking at?"

"Nothing. Just that you seem much nosier than before." Jayfeather could almost purr, imagining the offended look on her gentle but somewhat pretty face.

Briarlight pushed him. "You're a horrible cat."

"You do know that what I said could be in a literal way?"

Briarlight stopped walking. "What are you trying to get at?"

"I'm trying to get at *don't go nosing about in my business.*" Jayfeather replied, then continued walking to the elders den with his head held high. "And also about how you look." Briarlight muttered something behind him, then caught up with him again.

"You can't shake me off, you know. I'm going to be stuck in the medicine den for seasons to come."

Jayfeather rolled his eyes. "And how I dread tha-"

"What are you two squabbling about?" Millie's calm voice broke Jayfeather's reply. He spun his head to face where he sensed Millie was standing.

Jayfeather nodded to Millie in greeting. "I'm here to check on your cough." He could tell Millie was looking at the catmint in his paw in resentment.

"And you think that I could have greencough?" Millie asked as she lay down in her nest to allow Jayfeather to feel her chest. Jayfeather gave a silent nod.

"Breath deep."

After a few heartbeats, Jayfeather passed the catmint to Briarlight.

"Briarlight, can you get tansy? It isn't as bad as greencough." Jayfeather mewed. There was a small movement, and then Briarlight's presence left the den. Millie gave a small groan from underneath his paws. "What's wrong?" Jayfeather asked quickly.

"Nothing. It's just my old bones are giving me some aches."

"Tell me if it gets worse." Jayfeather ordered. When Briarlight came back, he turned to her. Taking the tansy, he gave it to Millie. "I'll visit you again to check on your cough." Millie gave a small nod, turning away.

Graystripe sat in his nest beside her, eyes distant. Briarlight thought that was a faint touch of longing in it. Jayfeather hurried out of the den. "Why are you so in a rush for?" Briarlight asked, trying to keep up with Jayfeather's pace as he headed to the medicine den.

"Nothing." Jayfeather slowed down, tail flicking in annoyance. "Why are you following me?"

"I just thought I could help out..."

"I don't need help. Especially not *yours*." Jayfeather snapped. *Besides, if I needed help with something, it would be concerning my thoughts of Half Moon.*

Briarlight struggled on ahead without another word, hurt emitting from her in waves.

Jayfeather rolled his sightless blue eyes. *She-cats.* All the same, he felt a stab of guilt. After all the seasons he had been with Briarlight, he knew she had been through a lot and didn't deserve such treatment.

Sunlight filtered through the trees as he padded in between them, eyes wandering around even if he couldn't see. His paws felt the way, and in a heartbeat he found himself on the lakeside. Sitting down, tail tucked over his paws, Jayfeather closed his eyes...

Jayfeather opened his eyes to see a broad, flattened face with a small snub nose. Striking orange eyes peered out of the dark gray fur that surrounded them. Yellowfang's lips curled back to reveal blackened yellow teeth as she looked at Jayfeather with a sceptical look in her eyes.

"Jayfeather."

"Yellowfang," Jayfeather replied back in a curt tone.

Yellowfang's eyes shone with amusement. "Your attitude hasn't improved, I see." Then she narrowed her eyes. "There's something different about you."

Jayfeather relished in the ability to see, but her words struck close to home. Was it so obvious?

"Yes. It's quite obvious, actually." Yellowfang spoke calmly, as though Jayfeather had said his thoughts aloud. "Especially since the other cat that has been haunting your memories is also in StarClan, being rather dreary to be with."

Jayfeather's ears pricked. "Half Moon is here?"

Yellowfang nodded. "Yes, she is. Don't get any funny ideas," she added sharply. "Your destiny has always been to be a medicine cat of ThunderClan. Time does not permit such love."

Jayfeather felt a sinking, regretful feeling at the pit of his stomach. Dignity and pride still in mind, he turned away to hide the expression on his face. "What if this was never my destiny?" He asked in a small voice. In a second, anger rose in him. He hated how vulnerable he sounded.

How weak.

"Love does that." Yellowfang replied in a soft voice. "Love can change so many things."Jayfeather was about to snap back, but he held his tongue, remembering the gentle Half Moon. At the corner of his mind, an image of Briarlight flicked up. "Do you really love her?"

Do I really love her?

"Love her enough to give up everything you live for, love her enough to repeat the same mistake your mother did?"

Do I love her enough?

Yellowfang stood up, stretching. "That's all I have to say. When you have your answer, come back to me."

"Wait!" Jayfeather quickly said as he saw Yellowfang turn around. "Where-where is she? I want to see her."

Yellowfang leveled his gaze with her own brilliant amber eyes. "She will visit you soon. In her own time."

Jayfeather raked the ground with his claws. "I just... Yellowfang, I have no one to talk to." He looked up, unsure of his suddenly unstable feelings. This was a new feeling to him. He used to know exactly, precisely*, what he's doing in life.*

Yellowfang's gaze softened. "There's someone you can talk to, you know." Jayfeather cocked his head in confusion. Yellowfang narrowed her eyes. "Someone who doesn't have anyone to talk to, either."

The vision quickly faded away. Jayfeather stared desperately at Yellowfang. "Who?"

She merely smiled, and he woke up.

Hey guys! As a new beginning to the year 2018, I decided to make this fanfiction 'Jayfeather's Decision'. It's about Jayfeather, Half Moon and Briarlight. Details to the story? Well, I guess you'll just have to read it to find out :) I've also written another fanfiction of Warriors : Firestar & Sandstorm/

Spottedleaf**. If you wish, check it out! It's on my profile :)**

*

This book, compared to Firestar & Sandstorm/Spottedleaf, speaks more of Jayfeather's feelings and what made him choose the she-cat. As the books in the original series never really mentioned anything between Briarlight and Jayfeather, this fanfiction doesn't have a firm base to write on compared to Firestar & Sandstorm/Spottedleaf, and therefore this book is slightly toned down a bit. It's more focused on emotions and feelings, but will also have its own fair share of drama.

*

Keep in mind if there are any grammar mistakes, I'll edit it soon. If there are any mistakes in characters' names, or different places, please do correct me! Please do not comment anything negative that would hurt a reader's feelings - but constructive criticism would be much appreciated. :)

So, who do you guys ship? Jayfeather and Half Moon? Or Jayfeather and Briarlight?

Anyway, hope you guys enjoy this story!

~Jayhow

PS: If there are slow updates, please forgive me.

- The cats and the drawing of them on the cover of this book does not belong to me.

2

"I'm going out to get some daisy leaves. I want you to do your exercises with Brightheart." Jayfeather said to Briarlight. "Ask Alderheart to clean the medicine den and sort out the herbs."

Briarlight's footsteps died away as she obeyed.

Padding out of the camp, he took in a deep breath of fresh air. He left the camp not just to collect more daisy leaves, but also to spend some time alone. To think about the sweet but distant memories of Half Moon.

No matter how much he tried, he still could not stop thinking about the memories of Half Moon. Was she alright, up there with the Tribe of Endless Hunting? He hoped he would be able to meet her again one day...

Another part of his mind still wondered who it was Yellowfang had been talking about. Mostly everyone in the Clan was happy and contented with life.

His mind still pondering on it, Jayfeather headed towards the WindClan border, where he knew a few daisies still grew. And maybe, if he was lucky, he'd be able to find some celandine.

Jayfeather reached the stream that divided the two Clans, starting to search for the herbs when the scent of WindClan warriors wafted over him. *A WindClan patrol.* His lips curled into a snarl. And out of all the warriors, he caught the scent of Breezepelt.

Briarlight

"*Jayfeather.*"

Briarlight pushed through the undergrowth just in time to hear the much-hated voice of Breezepelt. Her heart beat fast as she peeked out from her hiding place, wanting to know what was going on. She

knew she was supposed to be doing her exercises by now, but she had wanted to scare Jayfeather while he searched for the herbs.

And now Breezepelt was here. *What is he doing here anyway?*

Far away, Briarlight could see the WindClan patrol looking over at Breezepelt for a moment before they continued on down the hill, out of sight. *Breezepelt must have left his patrol to come meet Jayfeather.*

His teeth gritted in hatred, Jayfeather turned around to face Breezepelt. "What do you want?"

Breezepelt stood in an attack position from across the river, but of course Jayfeather couldn't see that. "If you remember, our fight wasn't quite finished from that time at the Moonpool." Breezepelt replied with a sneer in his voice.

The hackles on Jayfeather's neck rose. He curled his lips. "So? You plan to finish that fight now?" His voice held a challenge in it, although he knew that he wasn't so good at fighting. Briarlight closed his eyes with a small sigh. *Oh Jayfeather. He let his pride run away with him - as usual.*

Breezepelt purred, tail twitching slowly. "You're smart, despite your blindness." For a moment Briarlight saw a light of madness in his eyes. Shivering, Briarlight backed away, willing Jayfeather to leave and not be so foolish. But of course he had to stay. Jayfeather wouldn't back down.

Closing her eyes, Briarlight sighed. She knew what she should do - and was going to do it.

Just as Breezepelt leaped across the stream, claws outstretched, aimed at Jayfeather...

Briarlight ran.

Jayfeather

Jayfeather braced for the impact of Breezepelt.

Then suddenly fur zipped past his nose, Briarlight's limp tail brushing his cheek. Jayfeather flinched back in surprise. Breezepelt let out a furious yowl as Briarlight raised her paw and slammed the surprised Breezepelt onto the ground, her claws digging into his shoulder.

"*Leave Jayfeather alone!*"

Jayfeather felt the moment build-up. He could almost read Breezepelt's thoughts. "Briarlight, go!" He yowled, leaning forward to push Breezepelt down, but the WindClan warrior had already kicked Briarlight off, claws scraping straight through her chest. Droplets of crimson red blood splattered against the ground.

Briarlight yowled in pain, her sky-blue eyes blinking up in fury at Breezepelt. Jayfeather felt the waves of powerful emotions emitting from Briarlight, reminding him of her fierce-burning spirit. Jayfeather was going to move to Briarlight's side, but a blow directed to his right cheek knocked him down.

Jayfeather struggled to get up, Breezepelt's body pressing down on him. "You're not getting up this time, Jayfeather." Breezepelt whispered slowly.

Jayfeather heard Briarlight's breath becoming shallow, blood leaking out. "Briarlight..." he panted. "Go. I'll be fine."

Briarlight's claws scratched against the earth as she scrambled to get up. Shooting a venomous gaze at Breezepelt, she whispered with what breath she had left, "I'll come back Jayfeather. I won't leave you here."

She pulled herself away, slowly but surely. Jayfeather felt a surge of relief. At least she was safe.

Breezepelt's focus was solely on Jayfeather. He was leaning in, about to give a sharp bite. Jayfeather clawed him from the bottom, but Breezepelt forcefully dug his claws deeper into his flesh, making him lose more blood and energy. Jayfeather's struggles grew slower... until he smelt someone else. Someone painfully familiar.

Half Moon.

With hazy disbelief, he saw the starry cat appear in the blackness that forever surrounded his eyes. She looked at Jayfeather for a moment, and then turned to Breezepelt.

"Stop it." She ordered in a calm but stern voice. Jayfeather could feel Breezepelt's claws pressing against his sternum. Blood flowed freely from a wound on Jayfeather's side.

Jayfeather tried kicking Breezepelt off, but his half-brother was strong - stronger than him. Breezepelt pinned Jayfeather's paws to his side, rendering him powerless.

Breezepelt's head spun around to narrow his eyes on Half Moon. "Who in StarClan are you?"

Half Moon narrowed her piercing emerald-green eyes. "Let him go."

Breezepelt snarled. "Not until I get my revenge."

Leaping forward, Half Moon used the momentum and strength of her jump to push Breezepelt off. "You will never get your revenge. Calm your heart, Breezepelt. You mustn't let anger rule your life."

"No one orders me," Breezepelt snarled back. He puffed his chest out and growled loudly, in a warning tone.

She continued to face Breezepelt with a calm steadiness in her gaze that somewhat unsettled Breezepelt. She didn't care a bit about his warnings - after all, she was a StarClan cat. And Breezepelt knew that all too well.

He could see that she was a little faded, an easy giveaway that she was quite ancient. Breezepelt turned to Jayfeather with a venomous hiss. Jayfeather could feel his wavering feelings - of hesitation, and of immense hatred. But after another glance at Half Moon, Breezepelt gave one more snarl, "One day I *will* kill you."

Then he turned and left.

"Half Moon." Jayfeather gasped. Half Moon turned back to face him. He could see her in his mind, the only light in the eternal blackness.

"I'm here." Half Moon meowed in a gentle tone. She pressed her muzzle against his head. "Oh how I've missed you, Jay's Wing."

"I-I missed you too." Jayfeather admitted. He drank in her scent, the scent that had only been a distant memory. Happiness surged through him as reality hit him. *This was Half Moon. Not one of my silly dreams.*

"Now that I'm in StarClan, I hope to see you often."

Jayfeather closed his eyes. He still couldn't believe that she was actually here...

Brightheart's worried voice broke through the comfortable silence. "Jayfeather? Are you alright?"

Cloudtail's voice sounded, "I'll catch Breezepelt this time. That mangy cat is nothing but fox dung."

Half Moon licked Jayfeather's cheek one last time. "I'll see you soon." Slowly, she faded from sight. In a second, Jayfeather could already feel her absence. His heart ached slightly as he stood up on shaky legs and walked forward with a limp to his step.

He stepped on a pool of blood. Frowning, he lifted his paw to sniff it.

Oh StarClan. Briarlight!

3

Jayfeather limped quickly into camp, scenting the air desperately. Was Briarlight alright?

Alderheart rushed out to meet him, worry coursing through the young cat's body. Jayfeather quickly asked about Briarlight, continuing to walk to the medicine den without a pause.

Alderheart walked beside him, informing him in a worried, tight tone. "She refused to be treated until she saw that you were safe and treated to. I... I could only wrap a cobweb around her wounds, but that's not stemming the blood flow well. I fear she may lose this fight."

Jayfeather whispered words unfit for a young kit's age below his breath, quickening his pace even though the wound at his side hurt him. Millie and Graystripe rushed out of the elders den, but Leafpool held them back.

Jayfeather could hardly concentrate on anything, the sounds and senses all around him dulling to his heartbeat. Briarlight may not have that heartbeat by the end of the day. Just the thought of that sent shivers down Jayfeather's spine. All he could focus on now was Briarlight. And how foolish she was. "She shouldn't have leaped into Breezepelt's way. She shouldn't have waited to be treated." He whispered over and over, worry making his voice rough.

Alderheart, overhearing him, whispered in a soft voice, "But she did. For you."

Jayfeather's eyes were blazing when they turned to meet Alderheart's. "Well, she made a mistake."

Brushing past the cover of leaves, Jayfeather moved as quickly as he could to the corner, where he could smell blood and Briarlight's scent. "Briarlight," he called.

Briarlight's soft mew drifted through the suddenly stuffy room. "Jayfeather..."

Jayfeather's panic rose in him. Turning, he quickly shooed the other cats that had come to check on Briarlight out - including Millie. Millie was about to say something, but after glancing at Briarlight once, she nodded and left the den quietly even though he knew she was trying to keep her worry down. A moment later he heard her talking with Alderheart.

Jayfeather returned back to Briarlight's side, and not for the first time, he hated his disability of not being able to see. "What were you thinking?" Jayfeather snarled, his heartbeat getting faster as he detected the scent of blood that overpowered her sweet scent.

Briarlight coughed, her throat gurgling. Her chest heaved in shallow breaths. "Jayfeather..." she whispered in a soft voice.

Jayfeather set to work, his paws working over the herbs quickly. "Don't speak." He ordered, trying to settle his panic and worriedness.

A brush of cold wind came in. Bramblestar stood there, his eyes flicking between the two cats. "Leaf-bare is fast approaching us. Briarlight, how are you feeling?"

Jayfeather shivered. This was the worse time to have leaf-bare. "Get out," he snapped at the leader. Bramblestar blinked at him in shock, then took in his whole posture. Nodding in understanding, he left.

Jayfeather was about to spread the poultice against her chest wounds when she pushed his paws away. "Treat... yourself... first," she whispered.

"Are you mousebrained?" Jayfeather mewed, forcing her weak paws away and smearing the poultice into her wounds. She winced, flinching underneath his firm, steady paws. "I'm not going to let you die, Briarlight. You're going to survive."

Turning away, he scooped up a bundle of cobweb. "I'll make sure

of that," he whispered under his breath.

"Why, can't live without me?" Briarlight tried to joke, but her energy soon drained away again.

Jayfeather wound the cobwebs around her chest, stemming the blood flow as best as he could. "Don't move, alright?"

"Doesn't look like I'm going anywhere," Briarlight continued, but cut off abruptly at the end. Jayfeather heard a worrying gurgling noise as she struggled to breathe.

In a quick, swift movement he gently rubbed her throat. She moved away after a while, breathing still shallow but consistent. He sat back on his haunches, wondering what else he could do for her. Relief was far from his mind.

"Go, rest." Briarlight mewed, her voice small in the suddenly dark den. Night had fallen. It was going to be cold.

After checking on her, Jayfeather patched up his own wounds and curled up in his own nest.

Jayfeather woke up in the middle of the night, his ears catching the rustle of leaves as Briarlight shifted uncomfortably in her nest. Sleepily, Jayfeather got to his paws. He padded over to her, bending down to sniff. The poultice and cobwebs were still intact, but... she was *shivering*.

Jayfeather suddenly realised how cold it was. His fur fluffed out, he gently leaned down and licked her head, brushing her fur the other way. Pity for her - and part sleepiness - made him lie down, keeping her warm.

Briarlight's blue eyes blinked up at him, sleepy and troubled. "Jayfeather?"

"I'm here, Briarlight. I won't leave, I promise." He whispered at her, laying his muzzle gently on her pelt. "Go to sleep. I'll be here."

"Thanks, Jayfeather."

"Anything for you." Jayfeather said, eyes closing as he drifted off.

Author's Note:

What do you guys think so far? :3 Sorry if I don't post often, but I will get around to it :)

~Jayhow

4

A beautiful white she-cat stared into a pool, her emerald green eyes full of longing.

Sensing another presence, she lifted her head to meet the gaze of a black she-cat. The black she-cat, too, had green eyes. The black she-cat padded over, her pawsteps soft against the leaves that littered the ground of the forest.

"Half Moon," she greeted as she joined the white she-cat's side.

"Hollyleaf," Half Moon greeted. Her white tail gently laid upon Hollyleaf's shoulders. "Do you seek advice?"

"No," Hollyleaf purred. Her green eyes sparkled, glancing into the pool. Embarrassed, Half Moon lifted a paw to disrupt the scene being played on the pool. Hollyleaf raised a paw to block it. "There is nothing to hide. I know of your love for my brother."

Half Moon's eyes traced back to Jayfeather's sleeping figure, curled up next to a brown she-cat. "It's very hard not to think about Jay's Wing, even though I know that time was a long while ago." Half Moon admitted.

Hollyleaf's tail curled to touch her cheek. "I think of Fallen Leaves once in a while, too. I miss his presence at times. But it's something best left behind... because it can never be."

Half Moon shook her head. "No, Hollyleaf. It's possible-"

"Possible?" Hollyleaf looked like she was about to purr. But behind that, Half Moon could feel a slight sadness, longing. Hollyleaf's voice was hoarse, "Once, I may have dreamed that. But... fate is not to be, I suppose."

Half Moon dug her claws into the ground. Everyone was saying

that, when it *was* possible. Love... love could not die so fast. "When Jayfeather walks in StarClan, we'll be reunited." Half Moon meowed.

Hollyleaf's green eyes turned up to her, her black pelt blending into the shadows of the night. Pity glinted in them.

Half Moon knew what it was that caused her pity. Her heart ached to think of it. It was a horrible truth Half Moon had always tried denying... but it would always be the stark truth, no matter how much she tried to hide it. Sighing, Half Moon closed her eyes. "I know I'm ancient. I know..." she faltered, "I know that I may be faded - almost gone when Jayfeather comes. I may not even *be* around anymore. But I have to believe."

Half Moon stared up at the moon, tears glistening in her eyes. "It's all we can ever do - believe that everything will turn out alright."

Hollyleaf bowed her head in silence.

Half Moon turned her gaze back on Jayfeather and Briarlight. Pain stabbed at her heart like a thousand blades. *Would I still be here?*

"If your love is really so strong, Jayfeather could come to StarClan sooner than he's meant to be."

Half Moon looked at Hollyleaf with a curious look, and then it turned to one of horror. "No! I can never do that to Jayfeather. Asking him to give up his life... *no,* Hollyleaf. I cannot ever do that. I want him to live his life in happiness and joy until the end of his days - with or without me. He deserves so much more..."

Hollyleaf dipped her head, green eyes searching Half Moon's before she turned away. "Whatever your decision, I believe it will be the right one."

Staring down at the pool, Half Moon sighed. "I hope so too."

Jayfeather could feel the continuous press of loneliness weighing down on his shoulders. Briarlight was mostly sleeping, and barely woke up to keep him company. Alderheart and Leafpool were busy helping the Clan while Jayfeather stayed next to Briarlight's side,

and whenever Lionblaze poked his head in, Jayfeather was reminded that even *he* had someone to talk to - Cinderheart. He even had kits.

Heart heavy, Jayfeather was dipping moss in the clear spring water when Ivypool padded in. "Jayfeather, may I speak to you for a moment?"

Jayfeather raised his head. "What is it?" He asked. His voice was unusually tired and soft.

Ivypool sat down, looking at Briarlight. "I was wondering whether I have any kits." She gently licked Briarlight's head in an affectionate manner while waiting for Jayfeather's reply.

He approached her, feeling her belly. "No, you can still do your warrior duties. It's beginning to swell, but it will be another few moons before it begins to show. Other than that, you're still fit."

Ivypool relaxed. "Is Briarlight alright?"

Jayfeather glanced at the sleeping she-cat. "She's alright. I'm going to take her out of this medicine den soon."

Ivypool dipped her head. "I can see this is taking a toll on you. Would you like any help?"

"No," Jayfeather shook his head. "I can manage this."

"If you say so." Ivypool glanced at Briarlight one last time. "I've seen you with Briarlight. You are more gentle and understanding with her. Thank you for that, she needs it."

Jayfeather dropped his gaze, unwilling to admit anything or to reply to the warrior. Ivypool eyed him for a moment before she left. Jayfeather felt a wave of loneliness once again when he heard the excited chatter outside the den. He had experienced this feeling before, but last time he had more things to distract him with.

"There's someone you can talk to, you know."

He remembered Yellowfang's words, ringing in his head like a bell

that wouldn't stop. Feelings for Half Moon loomed up, but he pushed it down. Thoughts crowded his thoughts, tying itself into complicated knots that made him feel dizzy. He lay down with his head on his paws, eyes closed.

"Jayfeather?"

Briarlight's mew was dry and hoarse. Immediately he sat up, worry for her numbing all other feelings. "Briarlight, are you alright?"

"Just a little thirsty."

Jayfeather scooped the moss he had dipped in water and gently placed it next to Briarlight's nest. She lapped at it slowly, then lay back and sighed. "I want to feel fresh air again - to feel the sun's heat on my back."

Jayfeather purred, stretching and lying beside the she-cat. "I'll take you when your wounds are more healed. And when you have more energy."

Briarlight gently rested her head on his shoulder, breathing deeply. "Thank you, Jayfeather."

"It's what I do." He muttered. Suddenly conscious of what he was doing, he moved away and sat up. He never really paid attention to how gentle he was with Briarlight, but Ivypool's remark made him more aware.

As Jayfeather padded out to get something to eat, his heart clenched at the thought of how vulnerable he had become with Briarlight. *I have to stop this.* Leafpool's mistake still brought shame to his heart, but already his heart seemed to be mending - forgiving her.

I have to stop this.

Briarlight's beautiful blue eyes blinked up at him in his mind. He stumbled.

But... can I?

5

[image]

Leafpool was dipping moss into the clear water, washing Jayfeather's wounds in a gentle manner. Alderheart was back in the medicine den, watching over Briarlight while his mentor and Leafpool went out for a walk.

Jayfeather didn't know what had made him agree to going on a walk with Leafpool. His decision surprised himself, too. He sat beside the small stream, tail curled over his paws while Leafpool helped to patch up his wounds.

A cool breeze drifted through the trees, brushing his cheek in a caressing manner. Jayfeather's thoughts linked back to Half Moon almost immediately, remembering how she had once did that, too.

"What are you thinking about, Jayfeather?" Leafpool whispered, paws moving swiftly and expertly. Jayfeather's ears twitched, about to snap back. But then Briarlight's voice echoed in his mind, said a long time ago -

"At least you have cats that care for you, willing to accept you for who you are. I'll never be accepted - not truly." Briarlight's gentle mew reached him, breaking through his thoughts of Half Moon.

Jayfeather raised his head, blue eyes cloudy. "What?"

Briarlight sighed. "Are you thinking of that cat again? Jayfeather, how long are you going to linger in the past?"

Jayfeather's head turned back down, unwilling to meet her gaze. It was true. All he ever did was mope about Half Moon.

"I'm saying that Leafpool is a kind and understanding mother who wants to reach out to you again. I don't know why you're pushing away for." Briarlight muttered. "Why do you always *have to push everyone away?"*

Jayfeather walked out of the den then, anger fizzing through every fibre of his body because he knew what Briarlight had said was correct. That it was true.

"Thinking about life problems you'll never understand." Jayfeather muttered, rolling his eyes.

Leafpool purred in amusement, but Jayfeather could sense a touch of sadness in it. "Who said I'll not understand?"

Jayfeather turned to face her, hackles rising. "Right, because you handled the problem of your *kits* so *perfectly well*?"

Leafpool flinched, her paws shaking for a moment. She stood up. "Well, then I'm *sorry*, Jayfeather. I tried to help."

Jayfeather stepped away, tail flicking angrily. Leafpool turned and padded away.

A stab of hurt ricocheted through Jayfeather. *Why do you always have to push everyone away?* Briarlight's soft mew rang through his thoughts.

Half Moon's emerald eyes then appeared. *I'll wait for you forever, Jay's Wing.*

Jayfeather closed his eyes. At that moment, he felt a overpowering feeling of... *failure.* Failure for everything. Everyone had suffered because of *him.* Even Briarlight. She'd almost died saving *him,* when he wasn't worth saving for.

There was a small rustle in the bushes. Jayfeather spun around, alarm pushing through his cloudy thoughts and the sense of failure.

"Come with me."

Briarlight's order seemed like a light in the darkness. Blindly, Jayfeather stumbled after her, wondering where they were going until his paws met the pebbles that lined the lakeside. "The night is beautiful."

Jayfeather raised his head, imagining that he could see the millions

of stars every cat spoke about. "Except the stars. They're always so... distant, cold. *Lost.*"

"Sounds familiar," Briarlight moved closer to Jayfeather, pressing her pelt against his.

"Yes. The stars are like me." Jayfeather agreed. Anger at himself rose like a volcano, about to erupt. He was about to push Briarlight away when she spoke again.

"But they're not lost, you know." Briarlight's head moved to face the stars. "They're always together, playing in the sky. They're distant, but distant as one. They're not cold, they provide the twinkling brightness that makes the night beautiful. Without them, it'll just be a black screen of darkness."

Jayfeather blinked.

"You remind me of them, just that you choose to drift away from the others - like that one." Briarlight reached out to point up at the sky, and Jayfeather tried to imagine what she was pointing at. "That one's apart from the others. The one that doesn't share the joy or the dancing. If only that star could become one with the others. Life would be more fun, more meaningful before it dies out."

Jayfeather pushed his nose into her muzzle, breathing in her sweet scent as he felt a sense of nostalgia. Briarlight rested her head against his. "You can make the night sky light up. You already light up my world. Please try to light up others."

His sightless blue eyes turned upwards to face the night sky again. "It's hard."

"If you ever need anyone to talk to, I'm always here." Briarlight whispered, lifting herself up to go back to camp. "Let's go home."

Jayfeather smiled slightly. "Thank you, Briarlight."

"It's my job," Briarlight joked lightly, leaning her weight against his shoulder. "I'll be your eyes, Jayfeather."

Jayfeather purred, tail flicking over her ear playfully. "And I'll be

your legs."

AN: They're so sweet together :3 The picture attached above does not belong to me. I love the idea of it though! Hope you guys enjoy the story so far~ :)

6

Silverstream....

Honeyfern....

Spottedleaf....

Crowfeather....

Firestar....

Tigerheart....

Jessy....

Needletail....

Half Moon.

All the cats that cats from ThunderClan missed from past to present flooded Jayfeather's mind. They all blurred in his mind, Half Moon standing out like a stark white blotch among all the others...

"Jayfeather."

Jayfeather's eyes opened, connecting immediately with the eyes of a cat that made his heart tighten in pain and regret. "Half Moon," Jayfeather greeted, pushing his muzzle forward in relief. As he did so, he felt a twinge of wrongness... He usually only did it with Briarlight, who listened and advised him on what to do - the cat he had grown to admire and respect within the past few days...

Half Moon purred, curling her tail around his. Jayfeather gazed around the clearing, knowing that this was StarClan. "I'm sorry for not visiting sooner." Half Moon sat down in front of him, eyes searching his. "Are you alright?"

"Yes." Jayfeather nodded his head, looking down at his paws.

"Then why are you looking down?" Half Moon asked, concerned.

"I... I don't know what to do, Half Moon. Half the day I can only think of you. Something needs to happen." Jayfeather shook his head, looking up to meet Half Moon's worried gaze. "Something needs to change*."*

Half Moon blinked. Sadness emitted from her in waves. "You're saying that you don't want to meet me anymore?"

"No!" Jayfeather hastily stepped forward. "I-just... I..."

Half Moon winced. "I understand if you don't want to see me anymore - after all, maybe it's for the best. You'll miss me even more if you only get to see me through... through these visits."

Jayfeather shook his head again, frustration making him want to tear the ground apart. "Half Moon... it's not that. It's just..." His voice died away, hesitating.

Half Moon suddenly grew silent. Her feelings sifted, and then settled again. "Do you love me?"

The vision slowly faded as time passed with no answer.

"Jay's Wing?" Half Moon asked again. Jayfeather took a deep breath, his back turned to her. "You don't, do you? Even last time... even when you were with me..."

"No, Half Moon. I... I just have a lot going on right now. I can't think about that. Briarlight-"

"Briarlight?" Half Moon's ears pricked. Hurt filled her. "Is that her name? The she-cat you've been spending time with?"

"You don't understand, Half Moon!"

Half Moon stepped backwards. Hurt turned to simmering anger. "Do you really think I don't think of you too? Every pawstep I take, I think of you. Every breath I take, I think of you. I think of whether I'd be already faded when you come to StarClan. I think of whether you truly love me

or not." Half Moon took a shaky breath. "Looks like you don't."

Half Moon turned away.

"No-wait!"

The vision disappeared altogether, and Jayfeather dipped and turned in the black darkness, tossing around, forever and ever...

When Jayfeather awoke, he felt a gaping hole in his heart, and he also felt as though his stomach had been turned inside out.

What happened between him and Half Moon?

His heart clenched. *Oh no...*

Memories rushed back, making him feel nauseated. Briarlight's scent washed over him in a powerful wave. "Let's go out for a while."

"N-no... I don't feel like it. You go on ahead."

He could feel Briarlight's faint surprise. "Are you sure? You haven't been out of the den in ages. I thought you'd want to stretch your legs for a bit."

"I'm sure." He turned away, stomach still clenched tight in terrified regret. Would Half Moon ever forgive him?

Briarlight's hesitation was very clear. "Do you want me to stay with you?"

"No. I want some time to think alone by myself, Briarlight."

"Well... don't be that distant star, alright?" Briarlight paused at the den's entrance.

Jayfeather managed to smile a bit. "Don't worry, I won't."

She left the den, her pawsteps fading away as she headed out.

Left alone, Jayfeather sank into a distant state, not moving or speaking at all. His mind wandered everywhere and yet nowhere.

Regret and pain coated everything... *I didn't mean to hurt you... I'm sorry, Half Moon.*

He could almost imagine her now, turning away from him in sadness.

Suddenly hot, blind anger rose in him. He thought of who he had been as Jay's Wing - gentle, loving, even thinking about being a *mate,* for StarClan's sake. Had she been loving the wrong cat all this time?

Did you really think that I was that kind of cat? Jayfeather thought.

Half Moon appeared, her presence nearby. Her green eyes stared at him for a moment, tracing his figure. *You were and will always be my Jay's Wing.*

Aren't you upset with me? Jayfeather replied. Half Moon nodded, slightly.

A bit. But I still love you very much, Jay's Wing.

You don't love me*, Half Moon. You love the cat Jay's Wing. The cat I'm not.* Jayfeather stood up, facing her.

No, I love the heart - your *heart. Both of your hearts are the same. You are one, Jay's Wing.* Half Moon stepped closer.

Half Moon, stop lying to yourself. I'm different. I'm changed. Jayfeather turned away, eyes closed to hide the pain in them.

Half Moon blinked. *No, you're not.*

Jayfeather felt his own thoughts slip out before he could rethink them, before he could regret any of it. *Please... leave me. I will never be good enough for you. Maybe... maybe it was better to be apart.*

"Jayfeather, come quickly!"

Half Moon vanished as though she had never been there, although Jayfeather still smelled her scent - still saw the hurt in her eyes as she disappeared. Instead, Bramblestar stood there. "Squirrelflight

got bitten badly."

Jayfeather moved as fast as he could to help, but in his mind he saw everything in slow motion.

Because suddenly, he knew what it truly meant to be lonely.

7

Bramblestar was calling the cats that had been chosen to go to the Gathering. Jayfeather had refused to leave, saying that he needed to take care of Briarlight and Squirrelflight - and to take care of his own thoughts, too. He couldn't bear to think of going to a place so filled with cats that looked down upon him with judging eyes.

Briarlight's breathing was still uneven, but her wounds were starting to patch up again. Jayfeather sniffed the wound suspiciously. "Are you sure it doesn't hurt anymore?"

"Yes, Jayfeather." Briarlight rolled her eyes. "You've been asking a lot of questions regarding my wound today. Is something wrong?"

"No, no..." Jayfeather turned away, padding to Squirrelflight's side to check on *her*. He was fully aware that he was being more nosier than usual, but he had to take his mind off Half Moon. He... he had to do *something* else...

Did I make the right decision?

Half Moon stared down at the pool, her clear green eyes misting up. She splashed the water with her paw a little angrily. Her heart still ached with the raw feeling of rejection and sadness. *Had this all been a lie? Have I really been tricking myself?*

But she knew she hadn't. She knew... she knew whatever she had shared with Jay's Wing last time wasn't fake. It was *real.* It *had* been real. So... why now?

"What troubles you, Half Moon?"

Half Moon gasped, spinning around.

Feathertail sat there, tail curled around her paws in a polite manner. Her eyes betrayed the sympathy she felt. Half Moon looked down at her paws. "I think I made a wrong decision with Jay's

Wing."

Feathertail cocked her head. "Do you regret?"

"No, I don't regret *anything.* Jay's Wing will always be my love..."

"Then?"

"He said he doesn't deserve me. He said... he said that it would be better to stay apart." Half Moon spoke the words softly. Her mind whirled with all the memories she had lived with Jay's Wing, and she felt the years catching up on her, like a pounding beat. Her heart.

For a moment she couldn't't see her paws. The pounding beat grew stronger. Half Moon's green eyes widened in surprise and dismay. "Feathertail-"

Feathertail stepped forward.

Half Moon blinked, forcing herself to stay calm. The pounding beat drained and she could see her faint white paws again. Half Moon swallowed. "What happened?"

Feathertail's eyes closed in dismay. "Cats forget who you are. More and more cats have forgotten. You... you almost disappeared."

Half Moon swallowed, shaking her head. "I need to return back to the Tribe of Endless Hunting. I shouldn't have come here at all."

Feathertail's ears twitched in disappointment. "I will always remember you, Half Moon."

"Others may not." Half Moon whispered hoarsely, voice rough with sadness. "*Jay's Wing* may wish to not remember me at all."

8

Briarlight was flat down on her back, gazing up at the sky. Her paws stretched out, trying to reach for the clear blue sky. Jayfeather lay beside her, his silent presence somehow comforting as she did her exercises.

"Are you okay?" Briarlight asked after a while. Her breathing was even and calm, used to the tedious exercises Jayfeather had assigned to her a long time ago. "You're quiet."

It was another long while before Jayfeather replied Briarlight in a low tone. "Can I ask you a question?"

Briarlight sat up, licking her paw and drawing it over her ear. "Of course, Jayfeather."

"Are you lonely?"

She started, stumbling a little in surprise. How long she had waited for someone to ask her about *her* feelings; she didn't quite think he had said it properly. "Me? L-lonely?"

Jayfeather sat up as well, his sightless blue gaze on her. "Yes. Do you ever get lonely?"

Briarlight scoffed, keeping her tone light. "Well, sitting in the medicine den with cats fawning over you all the time, do I ever get a moment's peace?"

"No, I mean seriously."

Briarlight looked at him in surprise. Jayfeather's seriousness unsettled her. Although he had always been serious, it was never *this* kind. He never asked about other cat's feelings. At least, she didn't *think* he did...

She stared out at the calm serenity of the lake. Half of her wanted to be like that, so calm and perfect. A bird flitted across her vision.

She wanted to be that, too. Free and knowing its purpose in life - to eat, survive. And not to be broken, like her.

"Yes. I am." Briarlight whispered. Her paws kneaded the ground in silent frustration. She tried not to think about what could have been, how she could have been a fierce warrior... instead of being stuck, crippled and *useless.* "I'm of no use to anyone."

Jayfeather blinked, surprised. "That's not true."

"Don't you dare try to hide that fact, Jayfeather. I'm nothing but a burden. I've seen you in the medicine den, wishing I weren't there to annoy you all the time. Wishing I wasn't living in the medicine den. I've seen the Clan at leaf-bare, giving me the fresh-kill because they pitied me while they starve inside their dens. I've seen my sister, turn to me with a look of resentment on her face because Millie pays more attention to me than her. I've seen it all." Briarlight said in a shaking voice, closing her eyes. She didn't want to see the look on Jayfeather's face. "And yet I still cling on. Even if I don't know what I'm living for."

A paw covered hers. Briarlight opened her eyes in surprise. "You live as a bright light for ThunderClan."

Briarlight swallowed, daring to look into Jayfeather's eyes.

"You're not a burden. We love you as one. You tried to save Longtail, there's no fault in that."

"I failed, Jayfeather. He still died. And I... I remain like... like *this.*" Briarlight said, her voice cracking. "No one will ever truly understand this feeling, Jayfeather. So... so don't try." She pulled away, dragging herself away from him, closer to the edge of the lake.

"You don't think some cats don't suffer too?" Jayfeather's voice called behind her.

Briarlight stared into the lake, her reflection staring up at her. Imperfect. A burden.

Jayfeather's reflection joined her. "It's hard being blind. It's hard

knowing your own mother betrayed you. It's hard being not to love." He said the last one in a soft, almost vulnerable voice. As though he was thinking of someone.

"And have you loved? Would you give everything up for love?" Briarlight asked.

There was a small pause, and then Jayfeather lifted his head to stare across the lake, towards the horizon although Briarlight knew that he couldn't see it. It was sunset, the sun's rays stretching across the sky like long fingers, sucking the rest of its glorious light and heat away. Leaving nothing but the cold blackness of a dark night.

"Yes."

Briarlight felt a rush of surprise. Jayfeather loved someone?

"To feel like I'm accepted, to feel like someone would love me for who I am... *yes*. To feel the happiness, to feel the rush of excitement, *yes*. To never live a life of sadness, to never live a life of duty for the rest of the days... *yes*."

And at that moment, Jayfeather suddenly felt how Leafpool had felt. Why she had run away, to feel everything he had just said - and more. She had felt like she had belonged with *him,* Crowfeather. To escape the life of duty.

Briarlight stirred beside him. He could feel the different emotions fighting within her. He could tell that she was surprised - he was surprised at himself, too. He had just revealed more of his inner thoughts than he had ever had with anyone.

And the worse part was, he actually felt *good* about it. Briarlight didn't say anything - she didn't need to. Silence was the best answer right now. Briarlight was both comforting and understanding. She had faced the worst - and still faced the difficulties. And although hard, she had accepted it and lived with the way of life.

Jayfeather's mind ran through what he had just said and felt it was true. And he knew Briarlight understood. They sat at the lakeside, gazing out across it together, side by side in companionable

silence.

9

The days accompanying that came as a pleasant blur. Briarlight got to know more of Jayfeather as he opened up a soft side she never knew he had. She listened patiently to all his troubles, but also knew he was hiding something.

The sun shone bright, warming Briarlight's pelt as she lazed in the camp, watching Ivypool scold Twigpaw for what sounded like not following her orders. Twigpaw shuffled her paws and dipped her head in shame.

Briarlight switched her gaze to the elders den where Graystripe sat outside, staring into the distance like he was recalling back a memory. He blinked and sighed sadly, then returned back into the warm darkness of the den.

Her gaze lingered on the camp's entrance, waiting eagerly for Jayfeather's return from checking on his catmints. Her heart thudded fast as she heard footsteps outside, but when Larksong's black muzzle appeared, she lay back in disappointment again. She didn't know why she was so disappointed. Maybe it was because Jayfeather had turned out to be something like her best friend - and a good listener. He never judged her.

Briarlight dragged herself to her paws. Stemkit, Eaglekit, and Plumkit came tumbling towards her. Blossomfall purred from the nursery entrance. "Don't disturb Briarlight, young ones."

Briarlight shook her head. "No, it's alright Blossomfall. I enjoy their company." She bent her head, greeting each of them with a friendly lick. "Where's Shellkit?"

The kits shrugged. Plumkit's small voice spoke up, "She's been vomiting recently. I think she's still in the den."

This caused Briarlight some concern, but she recalled Jayfeather saying that everything was under control just this morning. She

nodded understandingly down at the kits.

Eaglekit cocked her head, thinking. "I know what to play! Let's play attack! WindClan will attack ThunderClan. Stemkit, you'll be WindClan. Plumkit and I will be ThunderClan!"

Stemkit's ears drooped down sadly. "I don't want to be WindClan!"

Briarlight purred. Her claws scraped a ball of moss up and she threw it right in the middle of the squabbling kits. "Let's play catch. I'll throw it as high or far as I can. The first one who gets to it is the winner."

The kits bounced excitedly around her, waiting for her throw. Briarlight's eyes caught a small flicker of movement to her side. As she threw the moss up, a grey paw flicked it, and it soared upwards. The three kits ran off happily.

Briarlight turned to Jayfeather. "What do you want to do now?"

"Playing with the kits sounds fun."

Jayfeather could sense Briarlight's faint shock. Jayfeather... he didn't seem to be the type to play with kits. At all.

Briarlight scooped up the ball of moss the kits had rolled back towards her. She flung it upwards and once again Jayfeather shot it across the camp. The kits squealed and tumbled over each other to reach it first.

Jayfeather sat down next to Briarlight, fur brushing hers.

"I didn't know you liked playing with kits." Briarlight joked, purring.

Jayfeather rolled his eyes. Amusement made his blue eyes dance. He leaned closer to her and playfully flicked his tail over her ear. "I didn't know, either."

"What made you change?" Briarlight asked, her eyes following the playful kits' movements as they chased after the ball.

Jayfeather paused, and with one glance Briarlight saw the vulnerable Jayfeather again. The one who had many scars behind his rude, angry facade. The one who Briarlight begin to like...

She shook her head. What was she even thinking?

He stretched. "I don't know."

"Is it a certain someone?"

His eyes blinked and his head turned to face her sharply. "What?"

"Is it that *she-cat?*" Briarlight purred, meaning it as a friendly tease, but Jayfeather's hackles rose up in defense. A flicker of hurt and anger flashed through his eyes as he straightened. He gritted his teeth.

Turning around, he walked away rather stiffly.

Briarlight immediately knew she had touched a sensitive subject. Curiosity gnawed at her. Something had happened between them... but what? She tried taking her mind off his strange behaviour - or that she-cat. Jealousy rose in her in a hazy wave.

"Briarlight?" Eaglekit mewed, pawing the older she-cat's paw impatiently to catch her attention.

Briarlight turned to face the kits again, snagging the ball of moss with her claw, but for some reason the rest of the time that she played with the kits seemed empty without Jayfeather sitting beside her.

10

Briarlight helped Jayfeather for the next few days. She could sense a change in the atmosphere, a change in his attitude. He became less sharp-tongued and more gentle. His mind was always far off, as if thinking of something. At times he whispered a name over and over, but Briarlight could never catch who it was.

Regret always lingered in his gaze and in his tone. Pain and sadness was an eternal emotion that shone from his blue eyes, wherever he looked. Briarlight felt a bit thrown off. He was supposed to be the strong one. But no matter what, Briarlight felt that she had to help him... in whatever he was facing.

So that night, Briarlight waited until all was calm and Squirrelflight was sleeping soundly before she approached the subject.

"Jayfeather?"

For a while there was no response, Jayfeather's back turned to her. His gray fur ruffled as he shifted around his nest to a more comfortable position. But Briarlight knew he wouldn't sleep well tonight - he hadn't been sleeping well for the past few days.

"What is it, Briarlight? Go to sleep." Jayfeather muttered, back still turned to her.

Briarlight huffed in annoyance. "I will *not* go to sleep. There's something wrong and I want to help."

Jayfeather groaned. "You're too nosy for your own good."

"You need to talk to someone about it."

"I do not."

"You do," Briarlight pushed. Her sky-blue eyes searched the darkness.

"Look, can we continue this conversation tomorrow? It's late and I'm tired."

"You barely did anything today. You haven't been sleeping well either, so you might as well tell me about it." Briarlight shifted to lap at the moss that had been dipped in cool spring water. Jayfeather stayed silent for a while, then she saw his blue eyes open in the darkness, matching her gaze.

"I have nothing to tell."

"Stop lying."

Jayfeather snarled. "I have *nothing* to tell."

Briarlight fought to keep her cool. "You can tell me, Jayfea-"

"*I have nothing to tell, so leave me alone.*" Jayfeather growled, his eyes blazing in anger. "Stop acting as though you know what I'm going through, as though you can *help* me. And one more thing?"

Briarlight raised her head defiantly.

"*You didn't go through a lot.* I've been through more days that stink like crow-food and dirt than you ever did. Your feelings are *nothing* compared to mine. So don't even think about comparing yours to what I feel right now. I feel a hundred times worse."

Briarlight paused, taken aback. Had the past few days, helping him and letting him open up, been just a pretty joke to him? Did letting go of her feelings, letting him know how she *really* felt and *trusting* him enough to tell him about them...

Had he really just taken it for granted? Taken it as a joke?

Briarlight curled her lips in disgust. "You really *are* fox-hearted."

"Who ruffled your fur?" Squirrelflight's sleepy green eyes peered up from her nest.

Briarlight gritted her teeth to hold back a rude remark. She glared at Jayfeather one more time before she turned away, closing her

eyes and wishing she were never here - had never opened up to that *fox-hearted cat!*

Jayfeather's silence was one of shock. Then it got quickly overcame by the hot, hostile scent of anger and fury. He turned away as well.

It took a while before Briarlight could fall to sleep. In fact, her eyes only closed when the sun's lazy rays began to stretch across the medicine den in a bright, yellow colour that seemed like a pretty joke as well - like how all this had been.

11

Jayfeather could feel the tension between both of them when he woke. Sharp guilt shot through him as he recalled what happened the previous night. They didn't speak - their argument was still a sore wound neither dared to touch or approach. But anger still coursed through his veins - both at her, and at himself. Shame was a shadow clinging on to him, forever dragging him down until he almost drowned in it. He couldn't believe how many cats he had hurt - first Half Moon, then Briarlight. Even... even his own mother.

If he could see, Jayfeather would have seen the raw heartbreak and sadness in Briarlight's eyes. But he couldn't see. He was blind, and could only feel. And even now, with his thoughts wrapped up in a cloud of sadness that Briarlight now knew the reason why, he was blind to her feelings too.

Briarlight left the den, cold and distant. It was a total opposite to her usual warmth and cheeriness. Jayfeather tried not to snap at Squirrelflight as he worked on her, paws deft and heart devoid of any emotion.

Squirrelflight didn't say anything, but Jayfeather could feel her disconcerting gaze on him. As if she knew. But she didn't. She didn't know anything Jayfeather had ever done. She wasn't even his real mother.

Life has always been a lie.

Even... even Half Moon. Jayfeather stumbled. Squirrelflight winced as his paws brushed against her wounds, but still she did not say anything. He turned away, Half Moon's green eyes blazing in his mind. Even there in her eyes he saw the same disappointment. The same betrayed look.

Jayfeather opened his eyes. Darkness. He moved his head from side to side. Still darkness. Nothing would ever be light, would it?

And then Squirrelflight spoke, and Jayfeather was brought back to the time when he was still young, before everything had ever happened and before everything was messed up. It was just him, Squirrelflight, Lionblaze, and Hollyleaf. That was all, and his whole world was perfect.

"Life doesn't turn out the way you want it to be." Squirrelflight had whispered. "Jaykit may be blind, but that doesn't mean he's less special than any one of you," she continued in the nursery's dim light. Lionblaze and Hollyleaf, still kits then, squirmed next to Jayfeather's body.

He remembered that feeling. The feeling of pride that soured through his chest as he thought of the word *special.*

Squirrelflight's warm smell was a comforting scent, one that smelled of *home* and *love*. But now Jayfeather couldn't say what *home* meant to him. What *love* meant.

"I believe all of you are meant to be great cats, cats that can change the future if you want. It doesn't matter if you're not mentioned in a prophecy. It doesn't matter if you're young. You can change and help your Clan just by being the best you can be and the best of what you do." Squirrelflight purred, leaning down to lick Lionblaze's - then Lionkit - cheek fondly. "Everyone in this Clan knows what they're doing. It doesn't matter if you're a medicine cat or a warrior. We all help each other so that we function and support each other. Every rank is important."

Jayfeather's paws kneaded the herbs, hard and fast. He wanted to forget. Why was he remembering?

Jaykit was running to the nursery entrance.

Squirrelflight lifted her head. "Jaykit? Where are you running off to?" Her mew sounded amused, but Jaykit's feelings were in a mess and in turmoil. And when Brambleclaw appeared at the den entrance, he collapsed at his feet. It was because of how strong Brambleclaw felt like - so noble, so composed, so... *sure*.

Brambleclaw had purred then, leaning down to carry Jaykit back to

his 'mother's' side. But when Jaykit explained why he felt, their faces grew graver and they hurried Lionkit and Hollykit away. Outside to play.

"If you say every rank is important, where do blind cats like me go? To the elders den? Abandoned?" Jaykit's voice rose to a sharp wail. "Don't leave me," he cried.

Brambleclaw exchanged glances with Squirrelflight. "No one's going to leave you, Jaykit. You're a part of our Clan and still can serve it even if you're blind."

Jayfeather remembered that feeling of panic. The feeling that he didn't belong. The feeling that now froze Jayfeather and made him drown - like when he saw Flametail in the lake, how he was unable to help him.

They had managed to quiet Jaykit down then, calm him and reassure him. But now... now Jayfeather didn't *know*. No amount of comfort or reassurance will heal the wounds in his heart, or help him be blind to the lies in his life.

He wanted to disappear, to run away and leave everything behind. He wanted to escape, to be free like Leafpool once was with Crowfeather. Except Jayfeather now would make the journey alone - towards the mountains where he first fell in love with a cat who now looked down on him with disappointment and hurt.

No, he wouldn't go to the mountains. He still wouldn't belong. He probably didn't belong anywhere. He deserved to live a life like a loner - at least he would still have some honor if he died in the wild.

Only when Squirrelflight repeated his name in a firm tone did Jayfeather blink and awake from his thoughts. His paws slowed.

"You're destroying those poor herbs," Squirrelflight commented lightly, a little amused like how she had called Jaykit as he ran for the entrance to the nursery, wanting to run and escape before they could grab him and throw him out. A more composed aura surrounded Squirrelflight compared to last time, when she was still

nervous to be around her kits ever since they found out about the truth - especially Jayfeather.

Jayfeather leaned down. It was true. The herbs were squashed beyond eating. Unable to be used. He sniffed and nudged it away, taking a new stack of herbs and kneading it - lightly. "So what happened?" Squirrelflight asked after watching him knead for a while.

He huffed and wrapped the kneaded herbs with a leaf. "Are you talking about Briarlight and me?"

"Yes."

"Nothing ever happened."

"She likes you, you know." Squirrelflight whispered.

Jayfeather paused, taken by surprise. "What?" Then he focused on his work and continued to knead the herbs as if nothing had happened when really his heart was beating fast.

"You really *are* blind," Squirrelflight muttered, but Jayfeather could tell that she meant it as a joke. He rolled his eyes. "It's very obvious, Jayfeather. I can almost say that you like her, too."

If cats could ever raise an eyebrow, Jayfeather would have. "There's something wrong you ate yesterday. It's affecting the way you think." He wrapped the herbs in a leaf again, pushing it to the side.

Squirrelflight purred. "You should just go and talk to her."

Jayfeather rolled his eyes. "We just fought yesterday, and I insulted her with one of the worst things possible. I don't even think she wants to talk to me."

Squirrelflight nodded her head. "True."

Again, Jayfeather would have raised an eyebrow if he could. "Is that supposed to help?"

Squirrelflight shrugged. "No."

Jayfeather lifted his head, sniffing. "I haven't seen Alderheart a lot recently."

Squirrelflight cocked her head. "That's true. He's been missing most nights, too. His nest is cold and empty whenever I wake up halfway through the night."

Jayfeather stretched. "I'll go search for him and ask him what he's been up to. You should rest."

"I will." Squirrelflight promised. "Don't forget to talk to Briarlight, and apologise."

Jayfeather rolled his eyes, heading out of the den. "I don't do that."

"For her, you should."

For her, I will.

"Jayfeather! Briarlight went out of camp and we can't find a trace of her!"

12

Briarlight didn't care anymore. She couldn't. Why should she? The only cat who actually accepted her for who she was and - maybe - even loved her... well, he made it very clear that he didn't think like that anymore.

Hot tears blinded her eyes as she struggled out of camp. Her breath came in ragged amounts, forcing her to stop to regain breath again. No one was around - no one could see her.

Good. Briarlight's mind was racing ahead of her beating heart as she stumbled past the undergrowth, walking and walking without a care of whether her paws would grow sore. It was already numb.

The sun beat down, hot and merciless as Briarlight continued to drag herself forward, blinded to where she was going until water lapped at her paws and she couldn't go any further. Half of her body was underwater, her head above it as she surveyed the calm surface of the lake.

Once, it had offered comfort. She couldn't recall all the times she had sat there, on the lakeshore, with Jayfeather. She remembered those whispered words into the night air, and at that moment she knew that she had loved him.

Briarlight closed her eyes, turning away and sludging through the lakewater to the shore, the current tugging her around. Her paws slipped underneath her, sweeping her off balance and plunging her into the lake. Her hind legs were dead weight, immobile as her front paws tried paddling to the surface, but the current pushed past again and shoved her down, against the bed.

Panic coursed through her, adrenaline making her fight back even more. *Help me. Please.*

Words gurgled out of her mouth, air bubbles escaping as she screamed. Briarlight thrashed against the current, pulling herself up

to the surface to gulp a mouthful of air before she was plunged back down. She couldn't see the shore anymore.

But as she drifted in that eternal blackness... Briarlight suddenly found a newfound sensation of peace. In that quiet darkness, nothing could hurt her or pity her. It accepted her, caressing and beautiful. All thoughts of Jayfeather slipped away as she got suspended in time.

Was this how Flametail felt? Was Jayfeather just there, watching him but unable to save him?

Briarlight moved her head slightly, and she saw Jayfeather. His blue eyes blinked up at her, fierce with affection she had seen in his eyes when he looked at her on the lakeshore once. Then she blinked and he was gone, too.

He never meant to stay. Briarlight thought sadly. *His heart always belonged to someone else.*

That's not true.

Briarlight gasped at the sudden voice, and suddenly she wasn't suspended in time anymore. And just before she snapped out of the daze, she realised who the voice was. She just *knew* it. It was that she-cat Jayfeather loved. Briarlight fought for air then, breaking the surface just in time. *Fight, Briarlight.*

Clinging on to that voice, Briarlight started paddling harder. It was as though she was bashing the barrier that hid all her thoughts, slowly breaking the barrier. The barrier that had kept all the negativity out. The barrier that had pinned her to the ground, tied to the Clan's rules because she wouldn't allow herself to dream of running away. The barrier that forced her to think she didn't belong, even though it was true. And she knew that now. Jayfeather had proved that.

The current pulled her, and she went along with it instead of fighting it. As her paws pounded against the water, she had a memory of her paws helping Jayfeather as they kneaded the herbs together.

Sad happiness welled up in her heart, and as the waves pushed her to a shore she was unfamiliar with, she rested for a while. Thoughts raced through her mind fast, and she couldn't catch any thoughts except one - *I can't go back.*

A swift breeze brushed past her, making her shiver in the cold. Shuddering, she pulled herself up to her front paws and licked her fur the other way to keep her warm. With the breeze it brought the stench of ShadowClan.

Lips curled, she tried not to breathe as she pulled herself past the pebbles and into the pinewood forest. She stayed to the border between ShadowClan and RiverClan, heading to the land beyond them, beyond all the Clans.

I can't go back. I have to go away. Like my father once did - beyond and alone.

Briarlight continued on, adrenaline and determination lending her energy to push forward until she finally crossed the border and into the unknown territory. She let herself fall back then, breathing hard.

Jayfeather...

***

Briarlight couldn't see.

Her paws flailed blindly in front of her as she tried with all her might to claw out of this eternal blackness. Suddenly, she couldn't breathe either. It was as though invisible claws were turning her stomach inside out, stealing the air from her lungs.

"Help!" She cried out with the last ounce of air she had. Was this how Jayfeather felt?

A brilliant white light shot through her sudden blindness. She gasped, feeling a fresh breeze brush against her muzzle as her eyesight slowly came back to her. A beautiful white she-cat stood before her, emerald eyes shimmering with what Briarlight thought was sadness.

Suddenly she felt overwhelmed with frustration. First Jayfeather, now this she-cat. Why did they all carry such sadness in their gaze?

"Briarlight?" The she-cat asked in a polite, gentle voice.

Briarlight dipped her head in respect, closing her eyes against the stars in her fur. It was very bright. "Who are you?"

"My name is Half Moon." The white she-cat answered in a soft voice. A shot of recognition made Briarlight take a step back. Her name sounded familiar...

Briarlight woke up to Jayfeather turning around in his nest, muttering and thrashing about restlessly. She dragged herself to her paws, moving forward to be beside Jayfeather. "Hey, you alright?" Briarlight asked, shaking Jayfeather's shoulder worriedly.

"Half Moon?" Jayfeather whispered, turning around to face Briarlight. He opened his eyes, and Briarlight could see the hopefulness in them - much like a kit begging to go out to play. "I'm sorry, Half Moon." Jayfeather's voice broke.

Briarlight gently bent her head to lie her muzzle on his head. "Shh. Rest, Jayfeather."

"Briarlight?"

Jayfeather's voice sounded puzzled - and a little disappointed, Briarlight thought with a sharp stab in her heart. "Yes, Jayfeather?"

"Oh." He closed his eyes again and drifted back to sleep.

Jealousy rose inside her again. So *this* was Half Moon, the she-cat Jayfeather had been calling out in his dreams - and the she-cat he's been thinking of so much. The source of his sadness.

"Greetings, Half Moon." Briarlight said instead, hiding her thoughts into the back of her mind. She mustn't think like that.

Half Moon's green eyes were on her when she lifted her head again, meeting the other she-cat's eyes with her thoughts carefully shielded. However Briarlight couldn't control the words that slipped

out of her mouth next: "Do you know Jayfeather?"

Half Moon blinked. Pain flickered over her gaze for a moment before she banished it. "It's hard not to," she purred - a little forcefully, Briarlight thought. "He's one of the most stubborn cats I have ever known."

Briarlight dipped her head. "He's been saying your name a lot," she mewed politely.

"He has?" Half Moon muttered, and the pain and sadness came back. "He has barely left my mind, too."

"What..." Briarlight's voice died. She knew she shouldn't be asking this question - this was too personal, on the verge of intruding Half Moon and Jayfeather's privacy.

"What happened between us?" Half Moon gazed up, towards the dark sky where it was sprinkled by millions of stars. Briarlight hesitated, then nodded.

"I thought we shared memories together. But he thought I loved another cat - another version of him." She shook her head. "It's very confusing."

Briarlight pawed the ground. "I have the whole night."

Half Moon looked back at her, then her gaze flicked towards Briarlight's broken, splayed legs behind her. Briarlight could see the pity in the depths of her eyes. It made Briarlight curl her claws deeper into the ground. But what she didn't expect to see was understanding.

"If you really want to know, I will tell you."

"I want to now." Briarlight said firmly. "If it's alright with you."

"I have nothing to hide." Half Moon replied in a simple, soft voice. And then she began.

13

[image]

Jayfeather's heart pounded heavily against his chest. *Where could she be?* He tried not to let another thought pass through his mind, but it slipped out anyway. *Is this because of me?*

Anger drove him wild for a second, and he stayed there in the middle of camp unmoving while the other cats muttered restlessly and started sending out search parties. He knew he should be going out to search with them, but something held him back.

Fear.

He was scared of the truth - about what Briarlight would think of him now. And he was ashamed of himself, obviously. This was the time when he needed Half Moon...

No.

Briarlight needs *him* now, and he won't fail her again - even if she didn't know it would be him that would find her. Besides, he should stop comparing her with Half Moon. Each cat have their own good things. Briarlight was a fighter, she wouldn't stop fighting.

Jayfeather knew this was what Briarlight had done all this time - push through the pain and fight. He would do so too - for her, if he could not save Flametail or keep Half Moon close to him.

He raised his head. "Let me come."

Bramblestar's scent was nearby. Jayfeather raised his voice a little louder so that the ThunderClan leader could hear him. "Let me come."

There was a shuffle of motion as Bramblestar turned. "Jayfeather?" He mewed with a tone of surprise. "You-"

"I want to come." Jayfeather straightened and looked straight into

Bramblestar's eyes the best he could. "I want to help her."

Bramblestar nodded. "Alright, you can join-"

"No." Jayfeather broke him off again, shaking his head and sounding impatient. "I'm going alone. It'll save time and effort."

"What?" Bramblestar asked in confusion, but Jayfeather brushed past him, heading to the camp entrance. "Jayfeather!"

"I'll bring her back, Bramblestar." Jayfeather called back over his shoulder without looking back. "*I'll bring her back home.*"

The next day

Briarlight woke up, a sharp ache of loneliness going through her. No wonder Jayfeather had acted as he did. *He felt so many things... so much hurt, and now I've caused him even more*. But then Briarlight shook her head and reminded herself that he didn't care about her. He only cared for Half Moon.

Briarlight closed her eyes against the bright sun. She padded into the remaining shadows still cast by a few trees in order to keep in the shade. A butterfly flitted past her vision and she excitedly batted it, as though she was still a kit. A sense of giddy happiness and freedom made her stumble excitedly around and about.

As Briarlight walked about, her paws brushed against a sharp stone that drew blood from her pads. She sucked in her breath to keep from yowling from the sudden pain. Frowning, she brushed aside the leaves to uncover the stone.

It was a grey stone, sharp and pointy that held a small tiny bunch of grey fur. Briarlight leaned down to give a sniff. *Jayfeather.* What had he been doing here?

She continued to walk forward, puzzled.

A tuft of his grey fur hung from a low branch. Briarlight tugged it off, winding it around her claw as though she could keep him safe from all the hurt he had felt. Briarlight continued to drag herself forward.

The wind rustled and whispered around her.

Urging her.

"Jayfeather?" Briarlight stopped in her tracks.

The blind medicine cat was right ahead of her, his blue sightless eyes gazing deep into hers. "Briarlight."

"What... what are you doing here?" Briarlight's voice died.

For once, Briarlight could see what he felt. Right now, she could tell that he was deeply ashamed of himself. "I came here to apologise, and I came here to bring you home."

Briarlight didn't say anything. She merely looked down at her paws, trying not to look into those deep blue eyes.

"I *also* came here to bring you back to me."

Briarlight blinked and looked up. "What?"

"I'm sorry, Briarlight. For what I said last night. I didn't... I was too-"

"I know what happened between you and Half Moon. This is why I'm going to tell you to leave me alone and go after her." Briarlight took a step forward, closer to Jayfeather. He shook his head.

"I don't want to hear anything. Come home - come back to me."

"You can't save me from what I've become. What you said last night was the *truth.* It's true. And because of true love, I encourage you to apologise to Half Moon. She's... she's the one for you. She's more important than me."

Jayfeather's gaze held Briarlight in her place, trapping her so that she couldn't move. "No. Everyone is equally important."

Briarlight narrowed her eyes, shaking her head in confusion. "I don't understand. Don't you love Half Moon?"

"I do. But... you deserve love too. I shouldn't have said anything like

that to you. You deserve so much more, something that I cannot give."

Briarlight couldn't speak for a moment, but when she finally gathered a few words to say, a bright flash stopped her from speaking.

"Please, don't argue over me." Half Moon's gentle voice whispered, soft like the breeze that had come with her appearance.

14

Jayfeather spun in her direction, surprised. "Half Moon?" He whispered.

Half Moon dipped her head in his direction, greeting him. "Greetings, Jayfeather. I understand that we left off at an uneven note."

Jayfeather swallowed. Was she giving him the cold shoulder? Her tone was steady, her gaze unwavering as she moved it towards Briarlight. "Briarlight," she greeted as well.

Briarlight swallowed and dipped her head in greeting. "Half Moon, why did you come?"

"I heard my name, it's hard not to stay away, is it?" Half Moon's tone was light and playful. "And I also hope that this talk will be able to solve both me and Jayfeather's problem."

"Oh." Briarlight moved to stand next to Jayfeather.

Jayfeather cleared his throat, thoughts racing too fast in his head for him to catch anything and speak. Half Moon let out a small purr, understanding what was happening to Jayfeather right now. "Shall I start?" She hinted.

"Yes." Jayfeather nodded, shuffling his paws in embarrassment. Their argument still hung like a black cloud at the back of his mind, sending him jolts of guilt and shame.

"Do you like Briarlight?"

Jayfeather blinked. Such a straightforward question.

Half Moon glanced apologetically at Briarlight. "I'm sorry. But if I'm going to spend the rest of my life waiting for Jayfeather to join me in Star Clan, I would like to know who he truly loves."

Briarlight nodded slowly. "I... I understand."

"Well..." Jayfeather dragged the word, wondering why his mind couldn't focus on one thought.

Briarlight

Briarlight wished he didn't speak. She didn't want to hear the answer. Sure, she liked him. But she would not blame him if he didn't have the same feelings back. She could see that both Half Moon and him were truly meant to be.

She didn't want to take that away from Half Moon, either. She'd suffered enough, walking the skies alone and always being apart from Jayfeather.

She looked at Jayfeather, who slowly lifted his head to lock his sightless blue gaze with hers. "Not in that way. She's just... like my own sibling. I would care for her, but-"

"Yes." Briarlight raised her chin. A spark lit in her, joy and happiness. If she couldn't find her own happiness, at least she could help someone else's. "Jayfeather may have done many mistakes, but he at least he tries to fix them. He's a very supportive and encouraging cat, worthy of forgiveness even if he has done a cat wrong."

Half Moon was staring at Briarlight, admiration plain in her green eyes. "Not many could have done what you did, Briarlight." She said fondly.

Briarlight flicked her ears. "It's no matter, Half Moon. As long as both of you are happy, I'm contented. I wish both of you all the best."

Jayfeather

Briarlight had her spark back in her again - the flame that Jayfeather feared had disappeared after their fight. *No, Briarlight is stronger than that.*

He touched her ear in a gesture of friendship. "Thank you,

Briarlight."

Half Moon's green eyes were sparkling with gratitude. "I have to leave now, my time on land is limited. But before I go... Jayfeather, I hope that we can get over our differences in time. Whatever you find a problem or you find a challenge, just know that I will always be here for you. I will wait until that day where you will stand next to me and finally be able to walk with me in the skies when you join StarClan."

Jayfeather licked her cheek. "I will wait for that day, too."

Turning to Briarlight, Half Moon touched her cheek with her tail in farewell. "Briarlight, I wish you continuous happiness and hope that someday you will be able to find someone who will love and cherish you because you truly do deserve it."

Briarlight dipped her head. "Thank you."

"I will take my leave." There was a small flash, and then Half Moon was gone.

Jayfeather turned to Briarlight. A small glow of happiness seemed to surround him now. "Let's go home."

"Let's go home." Briarlight affirmed, dragging herself over to stand a little closer to him. She leaned on him for support, and guided their way back to ThunderClan - back to home.

Author's Note:

Apologies for such a long wait for this chapter. I hope you guys enjoyed reading this, all your comments have made my day :) (I never knew Jayfeather was shipped with so many cats - it's mind blowing) XD

Jayfeather's with Half Moon.

Half Moon is a really nice and kind cat who really does love Jayfeather to the point that she waited all these years for him. I'm happy for her :)

Briarlight is a really awesome cat. She's strong and brave, and very sacrificial. Honestly in the real Warriors series they should give her someone that would love her well. In this chapter it's more of Briarlight's voice and how she wants them to be together.

~Jayhow

Author's Note

Hey there!

You've come to the end of this book.

Thank you guys for being such supportive, funny, and amazing readers who support and encourage me to continue writing (and updating) haha. I hope you guys enjoyed reading this story, and I really appreciate everything - including your comments that always make me smile! :)

See ya'!

~Jayhow

PS: I've written another Warriors fanfiction story: Firestar & Sandstorm/Spottedleaf. If you guys would like to read it, it's on my profile. And I may also write more Warriors fanfictions :)